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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIGALI 000756

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM RW

SUBJECT: GREEN PARTY PLANS 3RD ATTEMPT TO HOLD
ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

REF: KIGALI 717

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Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

¶1. (C) On November 6, polcouns met with Democratic Green Party of Rwanda (DGPR) leader Frank Habineza, secretary-general Charles Kabanda and a visiting Amcit Green party activist from California. Habineza said his still-unregistered party was running short on funds (he himself had had to take out a personal loan to finance activities), and he was unsure how to deal with pro-government media. (Note: The pro-government daily "New Times" and the independent newspaper "Focus" have in recent days run articles criticizing Habineza and his party. End Note.) Though frustrated that their most recent organizational meeting was disrupted (reftel a), the Greens have reapplied for permission to meet on November 20 in Kigali. According to Habineza, they picked that date in order to show disheartened supporters they are still active, and because November 20 comes shortly before a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting at which members will consider Rwanda's application to join the Commonwealth.

¶2. (C) The visiting Amcit asked polcouns pointedly whether the USG supported multiparty democracy in Rwanda. Polcouns replied by underscoring strongly our commitment to democracy, citing as evidence this and other meetings with the Green party, as well the USG's continuing support for party development provided equally to all parties in Rwanda. The activist urged U.S. diplomatic pressure on the GOR to register the Green party and attendance by polcouns at the Nov. 20 meeting. He also said he intended to launch a U.S. letter-writing campaign to Secretary Clinton.

¶3. (C) In a separate meeting, the Executive Secretary (strictly protect) of the Political Party Forum (an organization mandated under Rwandan law and composed of all registered political parties) on November 12 privately told one of our partners here that he was asked by persons who identified themselves as GOR officials if he knew that both the Green party and the PS-Imberakuri party had been in communication with our partner. The Executive Secretary said that he was aware that they were in contact and saw nothing inappropriate in the reported communication.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) The Green party continues to have trouble at home. It is short on funds and has already seen its first secretary general, Andrew Muganwa, ousted in September. (Habineza and other party leaders fired Muganwa after a rift.) However, its focus is not solely on Rwanda, nor are its difficulties

all self-induced. The Greens are likely to continue to seek and draw international attention, particularly if they face, or appear to face unlawful obstacles to their activities. The disturbance of its attempted organizational meeting in October and the reported monitoring of its leader's communications raise concerns. We will continue to urge GOR officials to ensure that the rules governing party formation and activities are applied fairly to the Green party and to see that the party and its leaders are not the target of any interference. At the same time, we will continue to weigh carefully Green claims of interference. The party appears to be pitching its organizational and publicity efforts as much or more to its international audience as to Rwandans and there is little evidence of local support for the embryonic party or its leader, Habineza, who is in his late-twenties and whose party's source of finances, beyond his own contributions, is unclear. The party's current secretary-general, Charles Kabanda, is a veteran politician who helped found the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) and the older Rwandan African National Union (RANU). In fact, Kabanda may be the power behind the Green party and his participation may reflect a division among the formerly Ugandan-based RPF old guard.

¶5. (C) When Habineza and Kabanda's predecessor Muganwa first met with Emboffs and other foreign diplomats in August, the Green party had just held successfully an uneventful initial public meeting at one of Kigali's top hotels, advertised in advance to Western diplomats. Habineza declared that he was surprised--and Muganwa gave the impression he was disappointed--that authorities had not stopped the meeting. Habineza conceded that it was held without the authorization required by law. Now, following the disruption of the Green's duly authorized October meeting (by persons the Green

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party communications director identified as GOR-linked security personnel), the party has garnered significant international attention. Even if the Green party does not have a major impact on next year's election, how it is treated may reflect the importance the GOR attaches to demonstrating Rwanda's movement towards increasingly multiparty democratic governance. END COMMENT.
SYMINGTON